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A Magical Bowl-Text and the Original Script of the Manichaeans. — By JAMES A. MONTGOMERY, Professor in the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pa.

The writer has been occupied for some time in preparing for publication the magical bowl-texts from Nippur in the Museum of the University of Pennsylvania. Six of the texts of the collection are in a peculiar Syriac script, related to the Estrangelo, and in the Syriac dialect, but of a form much contaminated by dialectic influences of Mandaic character. The texts have the same contents as the bowls already numerously published in the "Rabbinic" and Mandaic dialects.

As a sample of this fresh species of script I present here a bowl-text which has been kindly placed in my hands by Mr. Wm. T. Ellis, of Swarthmore, Pa. In the winter of 1910—11 Mr. Ellis travelled through Mesopotamia and was interested as a Pennsylvanian in visiting the mounds of Nippur. He was greatly impressed by the remains of the excavations made at this site by the University of Pennsylvania expeditions, and has been urging since his return home that American scholarship should resume the operations begun on so stupendous a scale. Among the curios he acquired at Nippur from the Arabs were three inscribed bowls, doubtless private spoils from the strata uncovered by the excavators. One of these is illegible, one is in the square script and "Rabbinic" dialect, and the third, in the peculiar Syriac script and dialect referred to, is the one I now publish.

The bowl is of earthenware, the usual material and size, and of 6 1/2 in. diameter by 2 1/2 in. in depth. The text is written spirally on the inside from within out; the last six lines alone are legible, the action of water collected in the bottom of the bowl having washed out the first lines, probably four in number. The characters are frequently very faint, but the readings can

usually be made out by the aid of the vocabulary and formulas occurring in similar texts.

Text (Plate 1).

... לא לביתה אנתתה ובנָה וקינינה מן זמנא ולעלם עלמין אמין יה
יה [יה יה יה יה שבע ... זה וזה על סכרא ת ... תי דרומין] ביתא
דסְרִפְהוֹן ברקא ברקא דנורא וסכר[א] ... וערפאלא דחשוכא ומרכבתהון
מרכבת למאכא חראם עליכון שמשא וסינא גזרדינא עליכון אסתאנא
ואור ... ותא וגאבלא אסוריהון קורקא נחאשא ועברא ופרולא וחתימין
בעיוקתה דשמחיא מריא בגדאנא תיהוא חתמתא ונמרתא לגניבא בר
דודאי ולביתה אנתתה בנָה וקינינה וניזחון וניפקון כול שידא דיוא חומרא
פתכרא ונ[ע]סתרתא ולליתא מנה דגניבא בר דודאי ומן ביתה אנתתה בנָה
וקינינה דלא נחטון ולא נאסכלון בהנא גניבא בר [דודאי]

Translation.

[A charm for Geniba against the evil spirits that they may not touch him] nor his house, wife, children and property, from now and forever and ever. Amen. Ya, Ya, [Ya], Ya, Ya, Ya, Ya!, seven [times?]. Avaunt, avaunt to the [south-ern?] bolt (pole?) of the heights of the house (?) whose flames are the lightnings, lightning of fire, and the [northern?] bolt of the shades of darkness, and their chariots the chariots of the *lattâbê*. Exorcism upon you, Sun and Moon, condemnation upon you, Astânâ and Ūr ... ūthâ. And I make fast¹ their bonds, links of brass and lead and iron, and they are sealed in the name of Šamhîzâ, the lord Bagdânâ. Be there sealing and warding for Genibâ bar Dôdâi and for his house, wife, children, and cattle, and flee and depart all demons, devils, amulet-charms, idol-spirits (= gods), goddesses and liliths from Geniba bar Dodai, and from his house, wife, sons and cattle, that they transgress not nor do harm against this Geniba bar [Dodai].

Commentary.

I speak of the script below. The orthoëpy (e. g. גאבלא, נאסכלון), forms (e. g. בנה, "his sons", Mandaic), and vocabulary are such as appear in the similar bowl-texts. The client's

¹ Error for נאבלנא?

name is known in the Palmyrene, cf. the biblical **נִנְבַּת**, 1 Ki 11 20. **סִנְא** I have found elsewhere, and it appears in the Syriac. **עֲבְרָא** = **אֲבָרָא** and **אֲבָרָא** in other texts of mine, and is cited by the native Syriac lexicographers under the form **אֲבָרָא** (see Payne Smith, *Thes.*, *ad voc.*) The **ע** is reminiscent of the parallel Hebrew word **עֲפָרַת**. It may mean *plumbum nigrum* or *album* (probably with different vocalizations), either metal having atropaic value — here probably the former.

The syllables toward the beginning, **יָה**, etc., **זָה**, etc., are found in the other texts, used as deterrents to the devils. **יָה** appears, from the spacing and faint traces of the letters, to have been written seven times, and so I explain the following **שִׁבְעָה זָה** = **זָה**, from **זָחָה**, = “avaunt”. What follows is obscure. Syriac **סַבְלָא** = an obstruction, water-dam, **סַבְלָא**, a bolt, and the term may be understood from the Babylonian myth of Tîâmat’s hide fastened up as the firmament with a bolt,¹ or else of the function of the sky as the dam-breast to the celestial waters. The following word may possibly be read **תִּימְנִיתִי** (a feminine form, but why so with **סַבְרָא**?), and the reference be to the southern bolt, or pole, of the sky, the source of the lightnings, the second use of **סַבְרָא** meaning then the north pole, the abode of darkness. The demons are commanded to flee to the ends of the earth. “The heights of the house” is obscure (for **רֹמָא** = astrological *ὑψώματα*, see Newbold, *JBL*, XXX, 204).² The **לְטַאבָּא** appear in other texts from Nippur; I can explain it only as a metathesis of **בְּטַל** (in Pael form), which is used of the “undoing” operations of demons (e. g. **לִילִיתָא מִבְּטַלָּתָא**).

The deity, whose seal is referred to, “the lord Bagdâna”, appears in one of my other texts. The plural is also found, = gods. The first syllable is the Iranian *bhâg*, “god”, but the remainder of the word I cannot identify. Here another personal name is also added, Šamhizâ; Prof. G. F. Moore suggests to me the doubtless correct identification with the fallen angel Semyaza in Book of Enoch. I have found a

¹ See King, *Seven Tablets of Creation*, tablet iv. l. 139, “he fastened a bolt”.

² Dr. von Oefele suggests to me that in the astrological scheme for drawing horoscopes the peak of the “tenth house”, which is at the zenith, is the abode of fire.

1	2	3	1	2	3
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X	X X	X	X	U V	V
Y	Y	Y	Y	U U	U
Z	Z	Z	Z	S	
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\	\	\	\	2 2	2
^	^ ^	^	^	2 2	2
_	_	_	_	2 2	2
~	~	~	~	2 2	2
!	!	!	!	2 2	2
"	"	"	"	2 2	2
#	#	#	#	2 2	2
\$	\$	\$	\$	2 2	2
%	%	%	%	2 2	2
&	&	&	&	2 2	2
'	'	'	'	2 2	2
((((2 2	2
))))	2 2	2
*	*	*	*	2 2	2
+	+	+	+	2 2	2
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.	.	.	.	2 2	2
:	:	:	:	2 2	2
;	;	;	;	2 2	2
<	<	<	<	2 2	2
=	=	=	=	2 2	2
>	>	>	>	2 2	2
?	?	?	?	2 2	2
@	@	@	@	2 2	2
A	A	A	A	2 2	2
B	B	B	B	2 2	2
C	C	C	C	2 2	2
D	D	D	D	2 2	2
E	E	E	E	2 2	2
F	F	F	F	2 2	2
G	G	G	G	2 2	2
H	H	H	H	2 2	2
I	I	I	I	2 2	2
J	J	J	J	2 2	2
K	K	K	K	2 2	2
L	L	L	L	2 2	2
M	M	M	M	2 2	2
N	N	N	N	2 2	2
O	O	O	O	2 2	2
P	P	P	P	2 2	2
Q	Q	Q	Q	2 2	2
R	R	R	R	2 2	2
S	S	S	S	2 2	2
T	T	T	T	2 2	2
U	U	U	U	2 2	2
V	V	V	V	2 2	2
W	W	W	W	2 2	2
X	X	X	X	2 2	2
Y	Y	Y	Y	2 2	2
Z	Z	Z	Z	2 2	2

Plate 2.

Col. 1, the Estranghelo alphabet; col. 2, the Syriac script on the bowls, with variants; col. 3, the Turkish Manichaean script.

number of connections between the bowl-texts and Ethiopic angelology. The phrase may simply mean "Š. the Lord God". In its opposition to the sun and moon, regarded as baneful, the text is in line with the Mandaic theology (cf. Lidzbarski's Mandaic Amulet published in the de Vogüé *Florilegium*), otherwise it is pagan and shows no direct Jewish influence, the formula "forever and ever, Amen", being a magical commonplace. אמתאנא = סטנא, "Satan" in perverted form; cf. Ethiopic Mastema.

The chief point of interest in this and the similar Syriac texts is the script. In my work on the Nippur texts I have made a detailed study of this script and need only note here summarily the peculiar features. A superior point is used to distinguish ܐ from ܐ, and also in my other texts to distinguish the feminine suffix in ܐ. The plural points are used in all plurals, the feminines of nouns, verbal forms (also pronouns), being almost always written above the final letter. The characters of form worthy of remark are:

ܐ and ܐ, with head turned to the right for distinction from ܐ, which assumed an identical shape with original ܐ and ܐ.

ܐ, with a prolonged tail to the left, the original head sometimes disappearing.

ܐ, with an elaborate flourish from the head to the left.

Final ܐ, a horizontal, pitchfork-like character, with various modifications, the stroke often very long.

Most of the characters have close relations with forms of the Palmyrene alphabet, and the script may be described as an elder sister of the Estrangelo, with close affinity in its peculiarities to the Palmyrene. The antecedent relations of our script were thus fixed, and it appeared as a peculiar provincial alphabet, found only on the bowls without leaving further mark in literary history.

But my attention chanced to fall upon the Manichaean fragments in a Turkish dialect found in Eastern Turkestan, a series of which have been published in the *Sitzungsberichte* of the Berlin Academy, between 1904 and 1910.¹ The ac-

¹ For the alphabet, see F. W. K. Müller in the volume for 1904, p. 348. The script was evidently of Syriac origin, with the addition of some Arabic characters. For the Arabic tradition of the Manichaean alphabet, see G. Flügel, *Mani, seine Lehre und seine Schriften*, 167.

companying table, Plate 2, presents the two alphabets comparatively. Some variant forms are given in the Syriac column. The similarity or rather identity of the alphabets is evident, and is most striking in the coincidence of the Turkish with the characters of the peculiar form in our Syriac alphabet, e. g. 𐤒 (n. b. turning of head to the right), 𐤓, final 𐤔. The Turkish differs in keeping 𐤒 turned to the left, as its point served to distinguish it from 𐤑. I have not found 𐤕 in my Syriac texts and in this lack the alphabet agrees with the Manichaean.

Our provincial Syriac script has thus an interesting history forward. It is the alphabet which was used by the Manichaeans and taken by them as the basis of the alphabet they devised for the Turkish dialect of their converts in China. And presumably it was the script of Mani himself, for he was a citizen of Babylon and our texts come from neighboring Nippur. Mani died A. D. 276¹; the bowls from Nippur are to be dated at the latest (on archaeological grounds, as I show elsewhere) about the beginning of the seventh century, with leeroom backwards of a century or two. The Turkish texts belong, I suppose, somewhere toward the end of the first millennium. We are thus presented with a well established provincial script which endured for several centuries and which, as a sectarian alphabet, was finally adopted for the representation of an alien tongue. Our only survivals of this peculiar alphabet, which has played its part in religious history, are rude magical texts from Babylonia and a Turkish script from distant regions. This is one more instance of the literary peculiarism of the oriental sects; Jew, Samaritan, Manichaean, the Syriac Christian churches, each party developed its own peculiar literary vehicle, starting from the native dialect or script, and in the end asserting it as its own. And so the provincial script in which Mani had learnt his letters became the peculiar alphabet of his church.

It may be added that the bowls themselves contain no traces of Manichaeism.

¹ Probably now to be corrected to 273; see *TLZ*, 1912, 446.